

## House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

### Stone Announces Support for Ethics Reform Legislation



HARTFORD--State Rep. Jack Stone, R-134<sup>th</sup>, Fairfield, Trumbull, has announced his support for legislation to revamp and strengthen ethics enforcement regarding state elected and appointed public officials.

“I am very happy that the legislature has stepped up to the plate and taken positive action to improve the image of and restore confidence in Connecticut state government,” said Rep. Stone. “Nothing has been more upsetting than to hear Connecticut referred to as Corrupt-icut.”

Stone said the legislation follows four years in which the governor and mayors of Bridgeport and Waterbury have been jailed on corruption charges. The State Ethics Commission itself had become been the subject of infighting and controversy, he said.

The bill calls for replacing the nine member State Ethics Commission with a nine-member Citizens’ Ethics Advisory Board and Office of State Ethics (OSE). Under this legislation, the ethics enforcement officer of the OSE may bring an alleged ethics violation before a judge trial referee to hold a hearing to determine if probable cause exists to believe that an ethics violation was committed. If probable cause is found, the board must initiate a hearing by a different judge trial referee to determine whether there has been a violation of the Ethics Code. The Chief Court Administrator must select at least ten judge trial referees to fulfill the new ethics duties and responsibilities.

The board will appoint the executive director. The executive director will appoint the general counsel, an ethics enforcement officer, and other staff. The commission staff will be divided into two divisions, one to handle legal matters and the other enforcement matters. Under the legal division, staff would train officials and provide public information about state ethics laws, issue advisory opinions, and make recommendations to lawmakers. The enforcement division would be responsible for investigating complaints and employ attorneys and investigators when necessary.

The state Senate passed the bill, SB 1 An Act Creating The Office of State Ethics And The Citizens’ Ethics Advisory Board, on May 26. The House is scheduled to concur as well, and governor M. Jodi Rell is expected to sign the measure into law. It would become effective July 1, 2005.

*Rep. Stone serves the 134<sup>th</sup> Assembly District of Fairfield and Trumbull in the state House of Representatives.*